

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 7427

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, ELAB, CG

SUBJECT: STRAWS IN THE ELECTORAL WIND

REF: (A) KINSHASA 7199; (B) KINSHASA 7039

1. SUMMARY: THREE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE SHED ADDITIONAL, ALBEIT SOMEWHAT UNCLEAR, LIGHT ON ZAIRE'S FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS AND ON MOBUTU'S POLITICAL REFORM EFFORT IN GENERAL. TWO OF THE EVENTS-THE ELECTION OF A NEW SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF WORKERS OF ZAIRE (UNTZA) AND THE CREATION OF AN OFFICE IN KINSHASA TO INVESTIGATE CITIZENS' COMPLAINTS AGAINST ABUSIVE OFFICIALS - APPEAR AS EVIDENCE OF LIBERALIZATION. THE THIRD, THE PUBLICATION OF ELECTORAL EDICTS, LENDS ITSELF TO CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. UNTZA ELECTIONS: AFTER WAITING FOUR MONTHS FOR INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENCY ON THE PROCEDURE FOR SELECTING A SUCCESSOR TO FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL KIKONGI, DEPOSED BY MOBUTU LAST MARCH, UNTZA OFFICIALS WERE GRANTED PERMISSION TO HOLD THE FIRST GENUINE ELECTION SINCE THE UNION WAS FORMED IN 1967. THEY CHOSE SIWA DIO BANZA, ONE OF KIKONGI'S FORMER DEPUTIES.

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IN THE CONTEXT OF ZAIRE'S FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS, SIWA'S RISE TO POWER IS NOTABLE IN AT LEAST TWO RESPECTS:

--HE WAS INDEED ELECTED BY THE 73 MEMBERS OF THE UNION'S EXTRAORDINARY NATIONAL COUNCIL WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM THE PRESIDENCY; AND

--HAVING BEEN EXPELLED BY MOBUTU FROM THE 1974 SPECIAL SESSION OF ZAIRIAN SINGEL PARTY'S MAKANDA KABOBI INSTITUTE FOR APPLAUDING

A DETAILED CRITICISM OF REGIME POLICIES BY ANOTHER PARTICIPANT, SIWA IS VIEWED BY SOME AS A SYMBOL OF THE REFORMS WHICH MOBUTU SKETCHED IN HIS JULY 1 SPEECH.

3. SIWA'S ELECTION HAS BEEN EXTENSIVELY PORTRAYED IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS AS A PREVIEW OF THE OCTOBER ELECTIONS. SIWA HIMSELF EXPLAINS MOBUTU'S DEPARTURE FROM PREVIOUS PRACTICE OF APPOINTING UNTZA LEADERS IN TERMS OF THE PRESIDENT'S NEED TO LEND THOSE ELECTIONS THE APPEARANCE OF CREDIBILITY. SOURCES WITH EXCELLENT ACCESS TO THE UNTZA LEADERSHIP OFFER TWO VARIATIONS ON SIWA'S EXPLANATION. ACCORDING TO THEM, MOBUTU BELIEVED EITHER (OR BOTH):

- THAT THE US WAS WATCHING IMPLEMENTATION OF PROMISED REFORMS SO CLOSELY THAT HE COULD NOT AFFORD TO INTERVENE; OR
- THAT IN LIGHT OF ALLEGATIONS THAT HE CHOSE THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HIMSELF, AND THEREBY DISREGARDED THE PROMISE MADE IN HIS JULY 1 SPEECH TO DELEGATE THAT RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS FIRST COMMISSIONER, ANY ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE THE OUTCOME OF THE UNTZA ELECTIONS WOULD HAVE BEEN COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.

WHATEVER MOBUTU'S REASONS, SIWA'S SUCCESS HAS ENCOURAGED SOME TO VIEW THE OCTOBER ELECTIONS WITH LESS SKEPTICISM THAN BEFORE.

4. COMPLAINT BUREAU: A LESS SIGNIFICANT EVENT WHICH NEVERTHE- LESS MAY POINT IN THE SAME DIRECTION IS THE CREATION OF KINSHASA'S PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE, AN OUTGROWTH OF URBAN COMMISSIONER SAKOMBI'S CAMPAIGN TO GENERATE SUPPORT OF

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MOBUTU'S JULY 1 SPEECH (REFTEL A). ACCORDING TO THE ZAIRIAN PRESS AGENCY, APPROXIMATELY 100 CITIZENS PER DAY ARE VISITING THE OFFICE TO REGISTER THEIR COMPLAINTS OVER THE "ABUSE OF POWER" AND OTHER "FAILINGS OF SOME IRRESPONSIBLE LOCAL LEADERS," PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO LAND DISPUTES. A TEAM OF FOUR INSPECTORS AND A POLICE OFFICER HAS BEEN FORMED TO INVESTIGATE THE COMPLAINTS.

5. ELECTORAL EDICTS: THE ELECTORAL EDICTS ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENCY REFLECT AT A MINIMUM MOBUTU'S DESIRE TO AVOID A RETURN TO THE POLITICAL VIOLENCE OF THE EARLY 1960S; THEY ALSO LEAVE ROOM FOR POSSIBLE VOTE-RIGGING. THE ELECTORAL CALENDAR ESTABLISHED BY THE EDICTS IS AS FOLLOWS:

- AUGUST 1-31, REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES;
- SEPTEMBER 1-30, CAMPAIGN;
- OCTOBER 8-9, ELECTIONS FOR URBAN COUNCILS;
- OCTOBER 15-16, ELECTIONS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL;
- OCTOBER 22-23, ELECTIONS FOR POLITICAL BUREAU.

6. JUDGING FROM EFFORTS TO MOBILIZE THE POPULACE TO ATTEND RALLIES DURING THE SHABA CRISIS, THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO ASSURE MAXIMUM VOTER TURNOUT WOULD BE TO SCHEDULE THE ELECTIONS DURING ONE OR MORE WORKDAYS AND REQUIRE EMPLOYERS TO TRANSPORT WORKERS

TO THE POLLS. HOWEVER, ELECTION SCHEDULE MAY BE DESIGNED INSTEAD TO MINIMIZE TURNOUT, AND THE ASSOCIATED RISK OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE, BY SPREADING THE ELECTIONS OVER THREE WEEKENDS, WITH THE LEAST IMPORTANT ELECTION FIRST, AND ENDING THE HIGHLY RESTRICTED (REFTEL B) CAMPAIGN A FULL WEEK BEFORE THE FIRST ELECTIONS. MOBUTU'S MODERATE DETRACTORS POINT OUT THAT THE SCHEDULE ALSO RESERVES HIM THE OPTION OF FINDING WAYS TO INFLUENCE THE IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND POLITICAL BUREAU ELECTIONS IF THE URBAN COUNCIL RESULTS ARE NOT TO HIS LIKING. HIS LESS MODERATE DETRACTORS, OF COURSE, DISMISS THE ENTIRE EXERCISE AS MEANINGLESS. IF THE ELECTION SCHEDULE DOES IN FACT REFLECT MOBUTU'S CONCERN TO LIMIT ELECTORAL VIOLENCE, HOWEVER, HE WOULD APPEAR INTENT UPON GOING THROUGH WITH AND APPROXIMATION OF COMPETITIVE ELECTIONS.

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